

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact
for the
Community Tank Grassland Restoration Project

Williams Ranger District
Kaibab National Forest
Coconino County, Arizona

Decision

Based upon my review of the Community Tank Grassland Restoration Project environmental assessment, comments received from the public and internal Forest Service specialists, I have decided to implement Alternative 2 (Proposed Action), which consists of the following four activities designed to restore grassland conditions and improve pronghorn habitat:

- Restore grassland condition in areas that historically were meadow or meadow like ponderosa pine savanna on 1,050 acres.
- Prescribe burn approximately 1,400 acres, with reentry burning in subsequent years to maintain grassland conditions.
- Remove approximately one mile of fence and modify one and a half miles of fence to facilitate pronghorn movement.
- Obliterate 2.2 miles of roads.

Implementation of Alternative 2 would help move the existing vegetative conditions toward the desired and historical range of conditions for the area that has resulted from livestock grazing and fire suppression over the last century. Past livestock grazing reduced competition to conifer seedling establishment and created a favorable seedbed. During the same time, fire suppression allowed higher than average trees to survive than occurred under a natural frequent fire regime. To prevent pronghorn sight distance from becoming obstructed, and also to meet the Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO) for the area, activity slash would generally be lopped or mechanically crushed to less than 2 feet in height. Piling or crushing would occur for timber sale operations and for heavy concentrations of slash. The burning or removal of piles would be prompt after treatment. Piles may be used or sold for biofuel. The Forest Service may offer limited personal-use fuelwood permits, to reduce the amount of slash in specific areas; these permits may include a provision for limited cross-country travel. Activity slash in the northwestern finger of the project area would be 100% piled and burned. The reason for piling and burning of slash on this site is to lower fuel loads along the base of Moritz Ridge and to reduce the uncharacteristic high intensity fire risk.

In an effort to meet the need to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic fire to the private property and address the concerns expressed by the private land owners, this decision will implement a buffer (approx. 300 ft) around the private property where, when possible, an average of 50 trees per acre will be retained in natural clumpy patterns.

The following implementation specifications apply:

- All “yellow pines” would be retained. Yellow Pines are generally 140+ years of age and have characteristics of yellow platy bark, large diameter lower limbs, and flattening tops.
- All junipers greater than 16 inches in diameter and pinyon pine greater than 12 inches in diameter would be retained.
- Where evidence exists of trees living 100 years ago (snags, down logs, stumps, or stump holes), one to two trees would be retained as replacement trees. Generally, the largest trees near the evidence would be retained to mimic historic distribution.
- Within 300 feet of private property an average of 50 trees per acre will be retained where possible in natural clumpy patterns to provide for visual screening (buffer areas).
- Large dead trees (snags) would be retained except where they pose a significant fire or safety risk and promote a hazard in logging operations.
- Activity slash would be lopped and scattered or mechanically crushed to a height of less than 2 feet, except that piling would occur for timber sale activity slash and heavy accumulations of non-commercial slash to reduce fuel accumulations that exceed fuel load objectives.

Approximately 1,400 acres of prescribed burning will occur. About 860 acres of the burning will be combined with vegetative treatments and 540 acres will have prescribed burning only. To prevent future encroachment of ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, and juniper, maintenance burning will continue on a 4 to 12 year interval over the next 20 years. Prescribed burning will generally take place in the fall or winter to limit the impacts to cool season grasses and migratory bird nesting activity. Dozer lines and/or hand lines will be constructed in areas where roads or other suitable fuel breaks do not exist. These areas will be rehabilitated.

The selected alternative would obliterate approximately 2.2 miles of roads within the Community Tank Grassland Restoration Project area. These roads are either dead end roads or roads that are not needed because they run parallel to other roads. Vehicle access to private property will not be affected.

Approximately one mile of non-functional fencing would be removed to improve pronghorn antelope travel through the area. To better facilitate pronghorn movement pronghorn crossings would be added to two ½ mile sections of fence. These ½ mile sections are in the highest use/highest priority areas. Additional fence improvements and crossings may be installed on the fences that enclose Community Tank and Section Ten Tank.

Mitigation Measures Specific to the Proposed Action

The Forest Service will apply the following mitigation measures to this alternative:

1. To minimize visual concerns associated with activity slash near homes, activity slash will be pulled back 100 feet from private property and slash between 100 and 300 feet from property will be hand or grappled piled to a maximum height of 10 feet.
2. Log trucks would not use the private portion of Forest Road 724 in Section 11.

3. Log truck traffic will be restricted to 15 mph for a one-mile stretch along Forest Roads 141 and 144 in the area near homes on the western side of Sections 3 and 10. Notify landowners along the one-mile stretch before hauling begins.
4. Upon implementation of this project, the Forest Service will place additional signs on roads within the project area that will warn hunters of nearby residences and of shooting restrictions within ¼ miles of occupied residences.
5. The burning of piles would take place within 2 years after the vegetation treatments, contingent on environmental conditions allowing.
6. Lopped and scattered or crushed activity slash will be a maximum of 2 feet in height.
7. No trees will be cut on 24 acres that is within the goshawk post-fledgling family areas (PFA). If the goshawk territory is occupied, avoid landing and hauling operations within the PFA and along the road that runs through the site during the goshawk breeding season (March 1 through September 30).
8. When selecting leave trees, retain some trees with lightning strikes and/or dead tops. This would retain deadwood (i.e. snag) substrate in the event of low intensity fire (prescribed fire).
9. Dead and down material ≥ 12 inches in diameter and ≥ 8 feet in length will be protected by different style of ignition pattern and/or avoiding of direct ignition.
10. Protect all fences from damage from tree falling, tree skidding, slash piling, and prescribed burning. Repair all fences, as soon as possible, if any are accidentally damaged by project activities.
11. Use designated skid trails and landings.
12. Range monitoring transects clusters and witness trees will be flagged before work begins. Do not cut down witness trees or damage transect posts. Do not skid trees or drive across the transects. Do not pile slash and/or burn piles along the transects.
13. Equipment shall not be operated when soil conditions are such that excessive compaction, rutting or accelerated soil erosion will result.
14. Remove mud, dirt, and plant parts from project equipment before moving it into the project area. This practice does not apply to service vehicles traveling frequently in and out of the project area that will remain on a clean roadway.

15. Design the broadcast burn prescription, so that it will minimize the potential spread of cheatgrass.
16. Conduct broadcast burns at low intensity in most areas, so that at least 20% cover of vegetation remains to protect the soil. Litter can be used to provide ground cover where there is insufficient understory plant cover.
17. Rip (rehabilitate) compacted soils on skid trails, landings, and fire lines after use.
18. Coordinate with the grazing permittee to regulate livestock grazing during and after the broadcast burning in order to protect livestock and emerging vegetation.
19. Re-establish natural drainage contours on obliterated roads. Effectively block access.
20. Project Managers must consult with Forest or District Archeologist prior to implementation.
21. Prior to any timber related activities, project managers must ensure that all heritage sites are marked for avoidance.
22. Timber crews may hand-fell timber on any heritage site as long as the slash and boles are carried off the site by hand, no piles within site.
23. Historic sites -1370 and -1371 must be protected from burning activities.
24. If any unrecorded sites are found in the project area, then work in the area must cease and the contract administrator or project team leader must contact the Forest Archeologist immediately.

Monitoring Specific to the Proposed Action

The following monitoring is included as part of the proposed action:

- Monitor Pronghorn activity with reporting of incidental sightings to the district wildlife biologist and evaluation of Arizona Game and Fish department's pronghorn population surveys.
- Monitor the project area for noxious or invasive weed populations for at least five years after project completion.
- Monitor vegetative and fuels treatments with a site walk through, to evaluate how well the treatment met project objectives.

- Range monitoring transects clusters can be used to monitor understory vegetation to evaluate how well the treatment met project objectives.
- Post vegetative and burning treatment stand exams can be utilized to determine if desired conditions were met.

Kaibab Forest Plan Amendment

The Community Tank area has been identified by Forest Service biologists and the Arizona Game and Fish Department as an area where there are critical needs for grassland restoration to alleviate pressure on antelope travel corridors which was originally grassland less than one hundred years ago. The selected alternative will reallocate 800 acres of forested ponderosa pine cover type to be managed for critical wildlife habitat. The area proposed for this reallocation would be managed for a lower percentage of forest canopy cover than is specified as a desired condition for the ponderosa pine cover type in the Kaibab Forest Plan for the northern goshawk. Based on the analysis provided in the EA, the reallocation of 800 acres will not have a significant effect on the northern goshawk (Chapter 3).

I have determined the change in area of land allocated to timber production is insignificant, falling well inside the bounds specified in the Monitoring Plan in the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. This amendment would not alter the goals, objectives, or the desired outputs of the Forest Plan. Additionally, the later the change, the less likely it is to be significant to the current forest plan; the Kaibab Nation Forest Plan was approved over 21 years ago.

It is my decision that a site-specific non-significant Forest Plan amendment be made for these acres only to cover this reallocation. See Chapter 1 (section: Re-designation of Land Suitability) of the EA for the list sites included in this reallocation and Appendix 1 of this DN/FONSI.

Rationale

I selected Alternative 2 because it best achieves the purposes and needs for the project. The quality of grassland habitat in the Community Tanks area is reduced by current tree density and is not providing wildlife habitat characteristics that are more similar to the grassland and pine savanna habitat conditions that occurred in the project area historically. The private property adjacent to the project area is considered wildland-urban interface. Tree removal and prescribed burning in the wildland-urban interface area would reduce the live and dead fuel loading, thereby reducing the fire potential and risk of high-severity crown fire over time. It will also improve habitat for pronghorn antelope and other wildlife species associated with grasslands and pine savannas.

The Federal laws directing management of the national forests guided my decision. The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act and the National Forest Management Act direct the Forest Service to administer the resources of the national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish. The Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act defines multiple uses as including the “harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land...” Following the direction of these statutes, my decision strives to harmonize and coordinate the

management of fuels, timber, range, watershed, wildlife and fish.

In my deliberations leading to this decision, I have carefully considered the alternatives presented in the EA and potential environmental, social, and economic effects of the alternatives. I have also seriously considered the suggestions and concerns that the public and other agencies provided in comments on this project. The numerous management requirements, mitigation measures, and monitoring activities included, ensure that alternative 2 will achieve the multiple use objectives in a conservative and environmentally sensitive manner. Mitigations are included that consider concerns identified by adjacent private landowners by modifying intensity of tree harvest, pulling activity slash away from private land boundaries before piling, and controlling log truck speed adjacent to private property.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Kaibab National Forest Plan (USDA 2004) and the Greater Williams Area Community Protection Plan (Coconino County and City of Williams 2005). In making my decision, I selected Alternative 2 because, of the alternatives considered (EA Chapter 2), it best addresses the purpose and need for action and the issues raised by the public.

Public Involvement

Public involvement was a key component in the planning and decision making process. The EA analysis went through several phases of public involvement.

The proposed action was originally listed as a proposal on the Kaibab National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the environmental analysis. People were invited to review and comment on the proposal through mailings, news releases, phone calls, and the World Wide Web. The proposal was mailed out to landowners in the area, interested public, and other agencies on July 9, 2003. An article requesting public comment was published in the Williams-Grand Canyon News on July 30, 2003. The proposed action was sent out for comment twice; legal notices were published on July 30, 2006 and June 29, 2009 in the *Arizona Daily Sun*. There was also coordination with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and consultation with American Indian tribes. The environmental assessment lists agencies and persons consulted.

Public comments received during scoping and the comment periods were considered in preparing the EA and in making this decision. The public comment we received on this project was also important to me in making my decision. Throughout this project we have appreciated the involvement of the adjacent private land owners. I feel that we have fully mitigated their concerns to the best degree possible while still being able to achieve the objectives of the project.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

In reaching my determination that preparation of an environmental impact statement is not needed, I considered the following factors and information developed during the analysis of the proposal and disclosed in the EA:

Context

The analysis of the proposal is in a localized area with implications only for the immediate area. The cumulative effects of past management, combined with the current proposal, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are displayed in Chapter 3 of the EA. As a result of the analysis of those effects, I believe the context of this decision, both from a biological and social standpoint, is localized. I realize that some wildlife species, for example large mammals and migratory birds, range outside of the project area boundary; however, I believe based on the environmental effects analysis, there will not be significant effects. My decision is consistent with the management direction outlined in the Forest Plan, as amended.

Intensity

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

My finding of no significant environmental effects considers both beneficial and adverse effects of the action. Beneficial effects have not, however, been used to offset or compensate for potential adverse effects. Impacts from my decision are not unique to this project alone, as previous projects have had similar activities and effects. Impacts associated with my decision are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

I conclude that implementing the proposed action will not have significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental effects.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The project does not involve or have any implications to National Defense or Security. Posted speed limits for logging trucks and coordination with Arizona Department of Environmental Quality for burning are examples of mitigation measures and design features in place for public safety. Ultimately, increased protection to the Wildland Urban Interface and to future firefighter efforts would be a long term benefit from this project.

After considering the analysis and mitigations in the EA, I conclude that implementing the chosen alternative would not significantly affect public health and safety because of the limited scope of the actions and proper mitigation measures.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area.

The EA did not identify any impacts to any unique geographic areas. According to the Council in Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Part 1508.27), unique characteristics are defined “*such as proximity to historic, cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*”

There are no park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the project area.

Ecologically critical areas are those areas which exhibit unique ecological characteristics or, if altered, may affect the viability of threatened or endangered plant or animal species. Botanical and wildlife surveys were conducted throughout the project area. An evaluation of the existing condition for the proposed action (EA, Chapter 3) determined there were no ecologically critical areas where management activities would occur in the project area.

I conclude there will be no significant impacts to ecologically critical areas.

A heritage resource clearance was completed for this project with the State historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurrence. All heritage resources will be protected (EA, p. 12). Project activities are in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Based upon these considerations, I conclude there will be no significant effects on unique characteristics within the geographic area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The proposed activities will contribute toward reaching the desired condition and goals and objectives outlined in the Forest Plan. I believe the effects of the management actions will not have a scientifically controversial impact upon the “*quality of the human environment*.” Controversy as described above is a dispute within the scientific community. Based on the comments received, it is my determination there is no scientific controversy with respect to the effects of implementing the proposed action.

Based upon these considerations, I conclude there will be no significant effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The actions included in my decision are similar to past actions, both in this project area and in adjacent areas. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks (EA, Chapter 3). The IDT that conducted the analysis used the monitoring of past actions as a frame of reference and combined that knowledge with scientifically accepted analytical techniques and the best available information to estimate effects of the proposal.

I conclude there are no unique or unusual characteristics about the area, which have not been previously encountered, that would constitute an unknown risk upon the human environment.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with

significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

This is not a precedent setting decision. Similar actions have occurred in the project area as well as across the Kaibab National Forest. Effects of this project are minor (EA, Chapter 3).

I conclude this action does not establish precedence for future actions with unknown adverse impacts to the environment.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts.

The decision was evaluated in the context of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. This action does not individually, nor when considering other activities within the area affected, cumulatively, result in significant effects. This determination is based on the discussion of cumulative effects in Chapter 3 of the EA.

I conclude there are no cumulative “significant impacts.”

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss, or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

The action will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because measures have been included to protect these areas. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources. There is a complete survey for cultural and historical resources in the community tank project area. The project is in compliance with the protocol specified in the programmatic agreement with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office.

Based upon this information, I conclude this action will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The action may affect, but not likely to adversely affect, the Mexican spotted owl (MSO) (*Strix occidentalis lucida*). The action will not adversely affect any other endangered or threatened species or its habitat. There is no MSO habitat or critical habitat within the project area. The prescribed burn area boundary is approximately 1.5 miles from the boundary of the Pumpkin MSO Protected Activity Center (PAC), 2.5 miles from the Kendrick PAC, and 2.5 miles from the Sitgreaves PAC. The Biological Evaluation (BE) prepared for the project determined the proposed action would not directly affect MSO habitat, but smoke from prescribed burning may affect individual spotted owls within the

PACs on Kendrick Mountain and Sitgreaves Mountain. The US Fish and Wildlife Service sent a letter of concurrence with the determinations for Federal Threatened and Endangered species date August 31, 2009 (project record).

Based upon the conclusions documented in the BE and concurrence with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, my decision will not have an adverse affect on species or their habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The action is consistent with the Kaibab Forest Plan, as amended with this decision. Specific analysis has also been conducted to determine compliance with Federal and State endangered species acts, heritage resource protection laws, and other resource protection requirements. Based on the context, scope and intensity of the environmental effects documented in the EA (Chapter 3) and factors in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the project does not constitute a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an EIS is not needed. (EA pages 3 and 4).

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision for Community Tank Grassland Restoration Project on Williams Ranger District is consistent with the intent of the long term goals and objectives listed in the Kaibab Forest Plan. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards, and incorporates appropriate land and resource management guidelines. The project was developed in consideration of the best available science. The decision is consistent with other applicable laws and regulations including the National Historic Preservation Act, National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Federal Water Pollution Control Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Clean Air Act and the Endangered Species Act.

A Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment were considered, I determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and that an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Administrative Review (Appeal) Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR 215. Those who provided comments during the comment periods are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer. Submit appeals to:

Corbin L. Newman Jr., Regional Forester
Appeal Deciding Officer
333 Broadway SE,
Albuquerque, NM 87102,
or fax to (505) 842-3173.

If hand delivered, the appeal must be received at the above address during business hours (Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Adobe (.pdf), or Word (.doc) to: appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. The appeal must have an identifiable name attached to it. Verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals.

Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing, fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, and filed (postmarked) within 45 days following the date this notice is published in the *Arizona Daily Sun*. This publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. When using the electronic mailbox, you will receive an automated reply if the message is received. If you do not receive this automated reply, it is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure the appeal is received by the deadline. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision.

Implementation

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

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/s/ Michael R. Williams
MICHAEL R. WILLIAMS
Forest Supervisor

December 18, 2009
Date

Appendix 1: Forest Plan Amendment

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA, 16 USC 1604(f)(4), Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) may “be amended in any manner whatsoever after final adoption and after public notice,”. Federal regulations at 36 CFR 219.14 allow forests to use the provisions of the planning regulations in effect before November 9, 2000 in order to amend forest plans. These regulations state that the responsible official shall 1) Determine whether proposed changes to a land management plan are significant or not significant in accordance with the requirements of sections 1926.51, 2) Document the determination of whether the change is significant or not significant in a decision document, and 3) Provide appropriate public notification of the decision prior to implementing the changes.

Implementation of Alternative 2 will require a site specific forest plan amendment to the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. My decision includes an amendment that will modify the total area allocated for timber production.

The need for this amendment, in order to meet the purpose and need for the Community Tank Project, was first disclosed in the scoping letter for this project. I have determined the change in area of land allocated to timber production is insignificant, falling well inside the bounds specified in the Monitoring Plan in the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. I have also determined that based upon the analysis by the wildlife biologist and that of the EA this change in management for these sites will have no significant effect on the northern goshawk. This amendment would not alter the goals, objectives, or the desired outputs of the Forest Plan. Additionally, the Forest Service Handbook indicates that the later the change, the less likely it is to be significant to the current forest plan; the Kaibab Nation Forest Plan was approved over 21 years ago. The public has been notified of this amendment throughout the NEPA process and it is my decision that a site-specific non-significant Forest Plan amendment be made for these acres only to cover this reallocation.

This Appendix is organized to:

- Describe the amendment element
- Explain the purpose and need for the amendment
- Describe the direct, indirect and cumulative impact of the amendment
- Apply four criteria to determine whether the Plan amendment is significant or insignificant, and
- Display my conclusion on significant or non-significance.

Site Specific Forest Plan Amendment

The selected alternative will reallocate 800 acres of forested ponderosa pine cover type to be managed for critical wildlife habitat. The reallocation would designate 46 acres of “suitable” ponderosa pine forest and 754 acres of “unsuitable” ponderosa pine forest to be managed as “critical wildlife habitat.”

The area affected by this amendment is outside of Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted areas, therefore the northern goshawk standard and guidelines would normally apply. This amendment would amend the plan so that the area affected by this reallocation would be managed for a lower percentage of forest canopy cover than is specified as a desired condition

for the ponderosa pine cover type in the Kaibab Forest Plan for the northern goshawk. Therefore the northern goshawk standards and guidelines shall no longer apply to the land affected by this amendment.

The following specific changes shall occur:

“[The Forest] Plan allocates 479,132 479,086 acres, or 98 percent of the tentatively suitable timberland, to timber production” (Forest Plan p. 9). (Note: the percent of tentatively suitable timberland would not change due to rounding.)

Purpose and Need for Re-designation of Land Suitability

The Community Tank area has been identified by Forest Service biologists and the Arizona Game and Fish Department as an area where there are critical needs for grassland restoration to alleviate pressure on antelope travel corridors which was originally grassland less than one hundred years ago. This site specific Forest Plan amendment is needed to meet the purpose and need for the Community Tank Grassland Restoration Project.

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts of this Amendment

The direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of this site-specific amendment are disclosed in the Community Tank Grassland Restoration Project Environmental Assessment (October 2009). There are no significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts associated with this amendment.

Application of Significance Criteria

The Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Manual (Forest Service Manual 1926.51) provides a framework for consideration when determining if a proposed change to a Forest Plan is not significant or significant. An amendment is not significant when:

1. Actions that do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management,
2. Adjustments of management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further on-site analysis when the adjustments do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management,
3. Minor changes in standards and guidelines, or
4. Opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

The Forest Supervisor has evaluated the proposed management direction and concluded that it does not constitute a significant amendment to the Kaibab Forest Plan for the reasons described below:

Actions that do not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management

The proposed amendment to the Kaibab National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) does not alter any of the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. The amendment will provide habitat to support viable wildlife populations and will maintain vegetative diversity on the landscape. It is a small-scaled site-specific amendment that will have no effect on Forest Plan objectives or outputs.

Adjustments of management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further on-site analysis when the adjustments do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management

Management prescriptions are applied in the 1988 Kaibab Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, through designation of Geographic Areas (formerly Management Areas), Land Use Zones, and Special Areas. This amendment would not change or have an effect on the management prescriptions in the Kaibab Forest Plan.

Minor changes in standards and guidelines

The proposed amendment does not change the standards or guidelines in the Forest Plan.

Opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription

The proposed amendment does not prohibit nor change the opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to the achievement of the management prescription.

The Kaibab Nation Forest Plan was approved over 21 years ago. Incorporating this amendment would bring the plan in alignment with current Forest Service direction on ecological restoration and resilience (FSM 2000).

Conclusion on Significant or Non-Significance

Based on the four significance criteria, and considering the Forest Plan in its entirety, I have determined that this amendment to the Kaibab Forest Plan is not significant.

